

OFFICIAL USE ONLY

3/8/63

CURRENT POPULAR OPINION
ON U.S. CUBA POLICY

Four recent surveys of American popular attitudes on Cuba policy have presented results which at first glance seem somewhat contradictory:

Public Opposes Invasion--Gallup Poll, Feb. 27 (nationwide interviews);

Public Less Worried Than Politicians--N.Y. Times, Feb. 27 (reporters in 10 American cities);

Short Of War Measures Supported--Samuel Lubell, Mar. 1 (interviews in 18 states);

Public Favors Tough Policy--Minnesota Poll, Mar. 3 (statewide poll).

However, detailed analysis of these four inquiries yields a fairly coherent picture of the current opinion situation.

A majority regard Cuba as a serious threat, but only 1 in 5 favors invasion of Cuba now, according to the Gallup Poll figures.

<u>59% Serious Threat</u>	<u>31% Not serious</u>	<u>No Op.</u>
20% Invade	64% Against Invasion Now	No Opin.

Serious Threat The Minnesota and Gallup Polls are in close agreement in finding belief that the Cuban threat is serious.

Gallup--59%-31% split on whether Cuba "seriously threatens world peace"

Minnesota--58%-31% split on whether Cuba presently "threatens U.S. security."

Exempted from automatic decontrol by Director, P/POS H.S. Foster

OFFICIAL USE ONLY

When the Minnesota Poll asked the 50% how serious a threat they saw in Cuba, 34% of the total said "very serious" and 21% said "not too serious."

No panic "At no time," wrote Samuel Lubell, "have I found in my interviewing anything like panic or hysteria over the extent of the Soviet military build-up in the Caribbean." Similarly, the New York Times concluded: "The public is not as worried about developments (in Cuba) as are the politicians."

Support for a U.S. invasion appears actually to have declined slightly, according to the Gallup Poll, as compared to mid-October 1962 (when 24% favored invasion) or at the time of the Bay of Pigs.

Approve Kennedy Handling to Now Both Gallup and Minnesota Polls find majority approval of the Administration's handling of the Cuba problem.

Gallup found 56% "satisfied" with the handling "in recent weeks," and 28% "dissatisfied." However, there were unusual differences in responses according to party preference. While satisfaction was registered by Democrats (69% to 16%) and by Independents (55% to 29%), Republicans registered a "dissatisfied" plurality (43% vs. 36%).

Asking about a longer period, the Minnesota Poll found 66% approving handling of the Cuban situation since the Kennedy Administration "took office in January 1961." This represented a decline from the 81% voicing approval in December 1962.

A partisan difference was also evident in Minnesota where "more than 8 out of 10 Democratic-Farmer-Laborites" approved, and "more than 7 out of 10 independent voters." But Republicans registered a margin of "disapproval" (46% vs. 41%).

Should U.S. Do Anything Now? If a majority of Americans oppose an invasion--and Gallup reports virtually no partisan differences on this issue, do they want the U.S. to just "sit tight"?

Newspaper editorials demanding "complete Soviet withdrawal from Cuba" were noted in the New York Times survey as continuing in the Midwest. (POG receipts show such demands from all parts of the country.) The Times survey also reported that "Southerners generally favored a somewhat stronger approach to Cuban problems, without specifying what."

Samuel Lubell stresses his belief that Americans feel that "this is the time to act against a threat that is expected to get worse." Lubell adds a related finding, "a dramatic drop in the fear of Soviet retaliation"--from 2 out of 3 last September expecting that dispatch of American troops to Cuba would lead to war with Russia to 1 out of 3 holding such an expectation today. As to specific American wishes Lubell said: "Generally people think the President should reinstitute last October's blockade and demand the evacuation of all Russian troops."

Demand Russian Troops Withdraw?

The Minnesota Poll asked a series of 3 questions relating to a possible U.S. demand for removal of Russian "troops and weapons" from Cuba.

78%-U.S. should "demand" troop removal

55%-In invade if they refuse

36%-Even if War

It is hardly surprising that Americans, earnestly desiring that the Russians go, and less fearful of Russian retaliation, should favor a U.S. "demand" for withdrawal. Having put themselves on record with the interviewer as favoring such a demand, most of these respondents went along with the idea of invading Cuba in case of a refusal. But when asked to assume that such an invasion "might bring on war with Russia," only 36% of the total supported an invasion policy.

A significant sex difference is noted by the Minnesota Poll. While men and women equally favored the demand for withdrawal, men were much more favorable to a Cuban invasion in the event of refusal (62% of men, 47% of women). On the supposition of a war with Russia, the difference was even greater: 46% of the men still favored invasion, only 25% of the women.

Salient Features Of Current Attitude Several elements of the current opinion picture respecting Cuba policy may be highlighted.

- 1- The U.S. position of unwillingness to accept the indefinite presence of Russian military force in Cuba seems to have virtually unanimous support--although a minority (11% in Minnesota) currently oppose a U.S. "demand" for withdrawal.
- 2- But demands for drastic action now are limited to a minority. Many appear content, for the time being, with the Kennedy policy of "watchful waiting." Some trust the Administration to act again, if necessary, at the right time.
- 3- Still, a "more active approach" would be welcome to most, including many of the majority who oppose an invasion now. Desire for more action has been noted by the New York Times in the South; and the polls make it clear that in the North this desire is widespread and is predominant among rank-and-file Republicans.
- 4- Many do not specify what the U.S. should do next. Some call for reinstitution of a quarantine. A few have suggested a blockade designed to prevent the export of Cuban arms to other Hemisphere points. Others call for the complete "isolation"--diplomatic, political, economic--of Cuba by all other OAS nations.
- 5- The present majority "satisfaction" with U.S. policy is likely to dwindle--unless the public feels that the U.S. is taking appropriate concrete action to bring about the end of the Russian menace in Cuba.

Character Of Current Public Discussion In Congress and in the press there is relatively little concrete discussion of what would be the advantages--and especially the costs--of particular "next steps," such as a demand for Russian withdrawal, reinstitution of the October quarantine, an OAS blockade to enforce Cuba's isolation, a U.S.--or OAS--invasion of Cuba. (Walter Lippmann's recent column stands out as an unusual exception.)

Commenting on the current situation, Edward P. Morgan sees a "double danger" for the Administration: "One is for Administration leaders to conclude on the basis of this evanescent public support that all is well; the other is to assume that the public really understands the issues or what the government proposes to do about them."

Suggestions for Information Activity

- 1- It should be made clear to the public that the U.S. Government is not "merely waiting." Public statements should continue to make the point that the U.S. is not prepared to wait indefinitely for the withdrawal of Russian military forces--even though an ultimatum to Moscow is regarded as unwise.
- 2- It should also be made clear that the Government is actively weighing various alternative measures. (Possibly a meeting at which several members of Congress could discuss various measures with Executive officials would help to show the Government's active search for the best "next steps.")
- 3- A background briefing for a limited number of columnists might stimulate thoughtful press articles surveying the realistic possibilities and their relative chances of succeeding.
- 4- As Department spokesmen comment on current developments, they might continue to emphasize the circumstances which produced success for the U.S. stand of last October--in terms of securing unanimous support from our OAS and NATO allies.
- 5- The present seems better than any future time for the public discussion of alternative measures respecting Cuba. The continued presence of Russians (and of Castro) in Cuba--apart from the daily possibility of some new untoward development--is likely to diminish the degree of confidence now vested in the Administration. It seems more prudent to discuss alternative measures now than in response to some fresh "incident."

Prepared by
Public Opinion Studies Staff
Bureau of Public Affairs
3/8/63